

School Attendance and Enrolment

School attendance in Ontario is compulsory from age six to sixteen. The school year begins on the Tuesday after Labour Day in September and continues into June. Any child who will be six years old by the first day of school in September must begin to attend classes unless he or she is considered exempt under the provisions of The Education Act, 1974. For more detailed information regarding school entrance and enrolment, we suggest you read our fact sheet "Entering School: Who, When, Where, and How".

French Language Schools

English is the language of instruction in most Ontario schools, but some schools use French as the language of instruction *and* of administration. These schools are designed to answer the needs of children whose first language is French. There are over 320 such schools at the elementary and secondary levels in Ontario.

Alternative Education and Education for Adults

A wide variety of educational opportunities is available to adults in Ontario. Elementary, secondary, and vocational correspondence courses are available to Ontario residents (or to Ontario residents temporarily living outside the province) free of charge. For further information regarding correspondence courses, we suggest you obtain our fact sheet "Learning at Your Own Pace by Correspondence".

Many school boards in Ontario also offer night-school classes that enable adults to upgrade their academic standing, to improve their vocational, technical, or commercial skills, or to pursue special interests. For further information, refer to the fact sheet "Making the Most of Night School Studies".

Post-secondary Education

Post-secondary education in Ontario falls under the jurisdiction of the Ontario Ministry of Colleges and Universities. Post-secondary educational facilities include colleges of applied arts and technology and universities. For more specific information regarding entrance requirements or any other aspect of post-secondary education in Ontario, please consult the guidance counsellor at a local secondary school, the college or university of your choice, or the Information Branch, Ministry of Colleges and Universities, Mowat Block, Queen's Park, Toronto, M7A 1L7, or telephone 965-6134.

For additional information on elementary and secondary education in Ontario, consult your local school board office or one of the nine regional offices of the Ontario Ministry of Education in the following locations:

Northwestern Ontario:	Thunder Bay (475-1571)
Midnorthern Ontario:	Sudbury (566-3480)
Northeastern Ontario:	North Bay (474-7210)
Western Ontario:	London (472-1440)
Midwestern Ontario:	Waterloo (885-0440)
Niagara:	St. Catharines (684-1123)
Central Ontario:	Metropolitan Toronto (491-0330)
Eastern Ontario:	Kingston (546-2641)
Ottawa Valley:	Ottawa (225-2230)



Ministry
of
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An Introduction to Education in Ontario



Are you a newcomer to Ontario? If so, you may be interested in knowing something about this province's educational system.

There are more than 4,600 publicly-supported elementary and secondary schools in the province, with a combined teaching staff of approximately 92,000.

Total enrolment is more than 2,000,000.

Responsibility for the operation of this vast system is shared by the Ontario Ministry of Education and the 198 school boards located throughout the province.

The Ministry's Role in Education

The Ontario Ministry of Education is a branch of the provincial government. Its goal is to ensure that equal educational opportunities are provided for all students in Ontario. The Ministry works toward this goal by developing general educational policy for the schools of the province, by setting standards for the education and certification of teachers, by providing guidelines for the development of specific courses by school boards, and by providing financial assistance for the construction of school buildings and the day-to-day operation of school systems.

The Ministry of Education is under the leadership of the Minister of Education who is an elected member of the provincial legislature. The Minister is aided in his duties by a staff of civil servants headed by a Deputy Minister. The Ministry staff, many of whom are highly trained education specialists, work in the Ministry's central office at Queen's Park, Toronto, in the nine regional offices of the Ministry, at the Ontario Teacher Education College, in the Ministry's sixteen special schools for exceptional or handicapped children, or at 909 Yonge Street, Toronto, where the Correspondence Courses Service is located.

How Education is Financed

Elementary and secondary education in Ontario is financed jointly by local school boards and the Ministry of Education. Each year, the Ministry awards extensive grants (currently over 1.7 billion dollars annually) to help school boards finance their programs. These grants vary in size according to local wealth and local needs. The balance is raised by municipalities on behalf of the school boards through

taxation on assessed property. If you wish further information on this topic, see our fact sheet "Education: Where Does the Money Come From?"

The School Curriculum in Ontario

Although all school boards are encouraged to develop their own aims and objectives with reference to the particular needs of students under their jurisdiction, the Ministry of Education defines common goals for the education of all students in Ontario. These goals are described in part in the Ministry's curriculum guidelines, from which the teachers and various education specialists employed by the school boards develop their courses of study. Innovative courses that fall outside the boundaries set by the curriculum guidelines must be approved by the Ministry before they are introduced in the schools.

In the early years, the guidelines place emphasis on developing the skills the child will need to communicate adequately, to understand his or her environment, and to prepare for further studies. At the secondary school level, students continue to receive a solid foundation in the basics, but are also given the opportunity to choose from a broad range of subjects. This flexibility allows students to tailor their educational program to their individual needs, aspirations, and career goals.

There are certain requirements, however. Because the Ministry of Education believes that secondary school students should develop an understanding and appreciation of their own country and also of the English language, every student in secondary school must earn at least four credits in English Studies and two credits in Canadian Studies as part of the 27 credits required for a Secondary School Graduation Diploma.

All secondary schools in the province provide academic courses, but a comprehensive program of commercial, technical, and vocational subjects is also available in many schools.

Special Education

The Ministry provides extensive assistance to school boards for the development of programs designed to meet the needs of children who are physically handicapped, mentally retarded, emotionally disturbed, perceptually handicapped, partially sighted, blind, deaf, or hindered by other learning disabilities.

The Ministry of Education also operates four residential day schools for blind and deaf children for

whom no local program is available, and, in co-operation with the Ministries of Health and of Community and Social Services, conducts twelve school programs for mentally retarded or emotionally disturbed children.

If you have a specific interest in Special Education in Ontario, we suggest you refer to our fact sheet "Education for Children with Special Needs".

The Role of Local School Boards

School boards are made up of trustees elected by the ratepayers who reside within the jurisdiction of the board. All candidates for the office of school board trustee must stand for election at the time of the municipal elections.

In Ontario there are two publicly supported school systems—the public school system, which is non-sectarian, and the Roman Catholic separate school system. The basis for this organization, as well as the structure of the two systems, is to be found in our constitution, the British North America Act of 1867. School boards within both systems may operate elementary schools, but only the public school system operates secondary schools. Some Roman Catholic separate school boards, however, do extend their elementary school instruction (in some of their schools) to include Grade 9 and 10 subjects. Roman Catholics in Ontario have the option of assigning their elementary school education tax for the support of the local Roman Catholic separate school board or the public school board. Secondary schools are supported by all taxpayers and are accessible to all.

School boards are responsible for the day-to-day operation of the schools within their jurisdiction in accordance with the acts and regulations passed by the Legislature of this province. Although the legislation defines many duties that a board *must* fulfil, it describes a large number of activities that are optional. For example, the board *must* hire the teachers, caretakers, bus drivers, and supervisory officers it needs for the efficient operation of the schools within its jurisdiction; it *may* establish Kindergarten classes or summer schools, appoint qualified psychologists, and permit its school buildings and premises to be used for any educational or other lawful purpose.